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THE STORY OF QUEEN ISABEL,
AND OTHER VERSES.



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STORY OF QUEEN ISABEL
AND OTHER VERSES.

BY M. S.



LONDON:
BELL AND DALDY, 186, FLEET STREET.
1863.

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THE STORY OF QUEEN ISABEL.

IN the grey halls of Hugh de Lusignan
Dwelt Princess Isabel, too wild a bird
For such a cage, for she was scarce
fifteen ;

Life quiver'd like a rosebud in her hand,
Showing the bloom and fragrance at its heart
Through films of beauty, not as yet withdrawn,
Waiting a warmer touch. She was betroth'd
To Hugh, and by the manner of the time
Bred in his house, that she might learn his ways,
Make her smooth brow a mirror for his smile,
And practise, ere she vow'd, a wife's submission.
Wives should have grown all perfect by such
practice.

Perhaps they wearied in the exercise,

Like children only train'd by scales and chords,
Who, grown, fling by their music as a task,
The secrets of its glory still unlearn'd.

She flutter'd through the household like a breeze
That brings a blossom down at every breath,
And makes an order'd walk impossible ;
The strong tree feels it stir about his heart,
And moves his stately arms to hold it fast,
But it flits on, to ruffle some lone pool
Or dust a swallow's wing.

Under the curve
Of the dark portal, on his steed, Sir Hugh
Sate like a picture, half his calm face light,
Half shadow, framed in azure sheens of steel,
And crown'd with plumes that scarcely moved, he
sate

So still ; but in his eyes the shadow fix'd,
And seem'd the symbol of an inward gloom ;
For he had pour'd his heart in one farewell,
Going to war, and on its flood a frost
Had fallen—I know not how—a look, a tone,
A touch, a silence—life is full of such,
Full till it overflows, and drops itself

At last into the tranquil depths of death.
You would have wonder'd at his face, it seem'd
Too grand to be so troubled ; but a rock,
Scorning the strokes of ocean, will grow dark
Under the passage of an April cloud,
And such a cloud was on his spirit now.
It pass'd. What wrought the change? It could
not be
This spray of myrtle striking on his breast,
Blown by the wind, or toss'd from some gay hand
Which closed the lattice as the flower came down,
And, closing, hid a flash of smiles ? What spell
Is in the blossom, that he takes it up,
Talks to it with the rapture of his eyes,
Kisses it like a relic, and receives
Life, grace, hope, pardon from the kiss ? Ask not !
Nor let him ask ! But let him ride away,
And let it lie as softly on his heart
As the first breath of some delicious hope
Long look'd for, oft refused, coming at last,
And hail'd almost with pain ! Yes, let him go,
And feed and fill the passion of his soul
With thoughts which answer to his own, and eyes
Which speak his language, and dream-histories


Most strong and subtle in their linkèd proofs ;
Making it clear that what he saw was false,
And what he dreams is true for evermore.

And Isabel, who threw the flower, and shut
The casement, and stood still, nor once look'd forth
To watch the parting hero, shook her curls,
And laugh'd, and told her image in the glass
It was a fault to be so beautiful.
Her maid had told her so, and, sooth to say,
If such a fault there be, she was most guilty ;
For, not the glory of her face, the mould
Like some young sister of Antinous,
The deep eyes, whose capacity for tears
Life had not tested yet, the perfect lips
Made for soul-utterance, when the soul should wake,
Not these alone, but something more than these
Bewilder'd and enchain'd you when she moved,
Making you think that all things fair on earth,
All woodland vaults, and mountain solitudes,
All sunset grandeurs, and all morning blooms,
Were meant as frames and backgrounds for her form,
And, till she took her place, were not complete.

She stood and listen'd, arching one small hand

About her ear, like some most delicate shell,
And smiling, as she gather'd in the sounds
Not of those parting footsteps. "O ! Isaure,
Think you he cometh ?" And Isaure replied,
"How could he choose but come ?" "I do not
know—

Was it a fault to answer when he spoke ?
I could not help it, if it was a fault."
"Nay, sweetest lady," quoth the false Isaure,
" 'Twas simple courtesy. I never saw,
Not I, such reverence as his. He seem'd
To think you born a queen. *He* would not chide
The lovely starts and freedoms of your youth
With that relentless pertinacious frown
Which marks you as a slave whene'er you speak.
Did you not see his rapture when you smiled ?"
Hanging her head, she answer'd, "No—I think
I should not know him—I scarce saw his face."
"How ? Not his great black eyes ?" "Black
eyes," she cried,
Lifting an angry brow ; "Girl, they were blue !
Blue as these sapphires on my wrist !" But here
A glance shot past her from the false Isaure,
Which clearly met its answer. Isabel,




With a faint outcry, like a frighten'd bird,
Dropp'd on her knees, dared not look round, but
crouch'd


As if to hide herself beneath her hair,
And spread her hands before her face—weak fence,
Soon sever'd ! One strong finger broke it down,
And, gather'd in the grasp of him who stoop'd
Above her, and uplifted her, she seem'd,
Indeed, a little fluttering frighten'd dove
In a hawk's clutch. But this triumphant hawk
Could sing as sweetly as a nightingale
To charm his willing prey.

He was a man

In the fresh noon of life, large-limb'd and tall,
Broad-brow'd and stately—with imperial eyes—
He had them from the old Plantagenets,
And had not so misused the legacy
As quite to mar it yet—though nought was left
But a king's semblance masking a churl's heart.
Poor Isabel, who worshipp'd what she saw,
Child Isabel, who saw but what she worshipp'd,
Now, trembling at his touch, but not with fear,
Murmur'd proud words, and thought she conquer'd
him




When he drew back abash'd. She could not trace
The subtle smile in his accustom'd eyes,
And, in his homage, she forgave herself
For overboldness, as he knew she would.
Then came the common tale,—“ I die without thee,
And death is better than to live without thee !”
“ Ah go—I must not listen !” “ Then farewell ;
Nor sight nor hearing shall offend thee more,
But grant my grave a tear !” Fast come the tears ;
So fast, he needs must stay to wipe them off.
And then strong words—“ A crown is at thy feet !
Speak, and I set it on thy brow !” And then—
Why linger on the way ? The end is known !
Pledged by each weak reluctance, she resists
Only to yield. “ It is impossible !”
“ Nay, nay, my love, the steeds are at the door.”
“ I could not go alone.” “ Isaure is here.”
(Fond false Isaure would guard her through the
world.)
“ But how disguised ?” And while she speaks, the
folds
Are wrapp'd around her. So a life is lost !
Her foot is on the downward slope of doom,
Exulting, weeping, confident, afraid,



She trusts—she ventures—she is at the foot !
And so Prince John of England steals his bride.
O, Isabel ! one throb of that true heart
Which heaves in hope beneath thy myrtle spray
Is more than this man's life. Thou know'st it not.
We seldom know the worth of what we lose
Till we have lost it ; but that man is blest
Who from the desolate caverns of the night
Looks back to the far morning, and beholds
A flower which died upon his heart, and not
A star which only pass'd before his face.
There are such things as empty lives, and these
Are drearier than full tombs.

A day and night

They rode together, each swift hour more rich
In tender thought and wonder than the last ;
Her dreams had all been vague ; and now she
dream'd
This bright reality should teach her all.
For she knew nothing—judged not—but received.
He smiled, and “ So,” she thought, “ a hero smiles.”
He spoke, she listen'd greedily, to learn
The way in which a model knight made love ;
He swore a little when his courser tripp'd,



And "This," she thought, "is done by angry kings,
I must not heed it." So she question'd not,
Miss'd not, expected not, but still received ;
Till once his bold eyes burn'd upon her face
So fiercely, that she shrank and dropp'd her veil,
And trembled inwardly a little while,
Then to herself said, chiding, "This is love.
I have been told I am too young for love ;
When I am older, I shall bear it better ;
But I am *not* too young to wear a crown,
And be a prince's bride."

So they rode on,
And came to Chaluz, to the English camp,—
A town of tents, wrapt round about a fort,
Like a white turban round a swarthy brow.
"And here," so said the prince, "King Richard lay,
That warrior of the world, who never slept,
Sieging and storming Chaluz for his pastime.
And here the prince would bring his lovely bride,
And give her to his sister-queen, to keep
Till Chaluz fell, and they could wed in peace."
All this was true. (When John of England spake,
Full seldom could men say, "All this is true.")
But Isabel was royal ; unbetroth'd,

He might have woo'd her in the face of day ;
He dared not wrong her. His unknighly heart,
(Cold, mean, and scanty, as a pauper's dole,)
Knew one deep fire—besides the hunger-fit,
Which he call'd love till it was satisfied,
And then call'd nothing !—one deep quenchless
fire,—

Hatred and scorn for noble Lusignan.
Judge no man by his love ; 'tis oft a shape
So mantled in his hopes, he cannot see it
For what it is ; but judge him by his hate :
If he shrink back from generous souls, and find
Specks in the sun, and stains upon the snow ;
If great deeds warm him not, and stirring words,
Words that are weapons, only arm his heart
With unbelief, condemn him ! He is dark,
He hates the light because his deeds are evil,
He is impure, and cannot look on God.


They came to Chaluz as the twilight fell,
And found a stir and tumult in the camp,
But not of battle, and a noise of tears,
(Strange music stealing through those banner'd
lines),

And such a wan array of soldier-faces,
Wide-eyed, mute, mournful, wheresoe'er they
 moved,

That it appall'd them like a spectral host
New-ris'n by moonlight, and the prince's voice
Stopp'd in his throat. But lo! one caught his rein
With, " Prince, the king is dying !" and another
Cried, " King that is to be, in one short hour,
Remember that I hail'd you first as king."

He, trembling, from his horse, and scarce aware
Of the slight form that flutter'd to his side,
(His gather'd rose forgotten, when the blast
Once touch'd himself), went onward to the tent,
And in, she still beside him. Afterward
The knights remember'd they had seen her there,
And marvell'd why they marvell'd not; they felt
Such palsy of amazement and distress,
That, as a cup receives wine, milk, oil, poison,
And holds them all alike, and has no sense
Of difference among them, so their eyes
Perceived all objects, and distinguish'd none,
None save that grand still face, from which the cloud
Of life was slowly passing, to reveal
Light never seen till now.

In the tent-door
Stood Isabel, and saw the dying king.
He, on his couch, an arrow in his breast,
Kept down his pain as though it were his foe,
And gazed, unshaken, in the eyes of Death.
She heard him speak. There stood an archer bound,
At his bed-foot, defiant, in the gripe
Of men whose faces thirsted for his blood,
Scarce able to restrain themselves, and wait
His sentence; this was he who slew the king;
And the king spoke his doom. "Take him away,
And set him free, I freely pardon him."
They dragg'd him forth. Then was the place made
calm
Except for grief; and the king smiled, and waved
His strong hand feebly, and, with steady voice,
Slow dying into silence like a horn,
Said: "Farewell, England! farewell, all my
knights!
Remember me in battle, as a man
Who never turn'd his back, nor broke his faith,
Nor fail'd to spare the weak. I have not shaped
A Law to keep my name for after-times,
As on a throne, above the minds of men;




But Man is more than Law, and I may leave
Some impress of myself upon the world,
One poor brief life, helping to feed the flame
Of chivalry, and keep alive the truth
That courage, honour, mercy, make a knight.”
Here paused the stately sound, and then resumed
More softly : “ Do not weep. O, die with me,
But do not hold me back ! I cannot die
With all this weight of tears about my heart.”
And low sobs answer’d through the stillness, yet
You could not see who wept. Then stretch’d the
king

His arms, and cried : “ I see, I see a Cross
Beneath the palms. O, weary waste of sand !
O, Cross, my home ! let me lie down and sleep
At Thy dear foot, and dream of deeds to come,
Forgetting all the feeble, sinful past !
Father, forgive me ! Is my brother there ?
Let some one tell him to be true to England.
Where is my sword ? This trumpet in mine ears,
So far, so faint, is yet a call to war—
To horse ! To horse ! ” Erect he sate, and shook
His sword, cried : “ God for England ! ” and was
dead.

Then from the floor a woman rose, and stood
A moment, swaying, like a wind-swept reed,
And stared upon the corpse, and touch'd its hand
With passionate lips, and groan'd, and moved away,
While the knights murmur'd : " Passage for the
queen."

Out of the tent she pass'd, her garments brush'd
By Isabel, and, while a heart beats ten,
The two stood face to face, as if i' the west
The grief and darkness of a night of storms
Fronted the morning's joy. Another dawn
Glisten'd in Isabel's unconscious eyes,
For she had look'd upon a great man's death,
And she was changed. There is a day in Spring
When under all the earth the secret germs
Begin to stir and glow before they bud ;
The wealth and festal pomps of Midsummer
Lie in the heart of that inglorious day,
Which no man names with blessing, though its work
Is blest by all the world. Such days there are
In the slow story of the growth of souls,
And such a day was this for Isabel.

Then came a time of tumult. Knight by knight



To their new lord did homage ; jubilee
Blent strangely with the sights and sounds of woe,
As if some scoffer play'd a light lavolte
To mock a funeral. Not an hour stay'd John
Beside his brother's couch ; with shaking hands
He took the proffer'd crown ; and with white lips,
Widening in shallow laughter, mutter'd words
Of welcome to his vassals' fealty.
She who stood near him thought his heart was moved
By some strong shock of crossing waves, which
meet

And shatter into trifles of mere spray.
It was not so. His was a coward soul,
Afraid of all but pleasure ; shuddering
At life, or death, or greatness, or repose ;
He made her sit beside him, and rejoiced
To read the wonder of her loveliness
In the first glance and start of all who came ;
He made them kiss her hand, and for an hour
Revell'd in sufferance of such petty homage,
Like one who shows a priceless gem, that men
May covet it ; then in a sudden wrath
He snatch'd her fingers from the lip of one
Who knelt, and toss'd them from him with an oath

Hard as a blow, and sent her to her maids.
Yet when he saw her next, he knew so well
To speak of passion and of reverence,
To turn his anger on the knight, whose lips
Were something over-busy with her hand,
That her proud heart, bewilder'd but appeased,
Misdemean'd him still her lover, and forgave
The natural, noble jealousies of love.
O, new to love and life ! thine ignorance
Melts slowly into knowledge ; twice perhaps
Thou mayst be cheated with a lie—aye, thrice—
Not oftener ; thou shalt stretch thy hand to feel
For the quick pulses of a fellow-heart,
And find a blank, and know thyself deceived.

The Queen, a four-days wife, and panting still
Up to her neck in splendours, sate enthroned
Her lord beside her, on a gala day,
To see the people come, and go—and smile
Like a mere goddess o'er the human scene.
Her girlish thoughts were lower than her throne,
Playing, like children, on the swarded slopes,
Hiding in leafy nests, or dancing forth
Like May-flies on quick waters ; but the crown

Which girt her brow, was scarce a stronger ring
Than that wherewith her pride had fenced her youth,
And she sate still, in patient stateliness.
There came a herald to the presence, sent
She knew not whence, but something in his face,
Lifted from due obeisance, as he look'd
Into her careless eyes before he spoke,
Hath made her start and blush. Yet in that look
No insult lurk'd ; it seem'd a mute appeal,
Like a true hound inquiring for his master.
Three times a horn was winded, then he spoke :—
“ John, King of England, listen to my voice.
The noble Marcher, Hugh de Lusignan,
Hath sent me here to challenge and defy thee,
And scorn thee for a caitiff, to the face ;
For that thou didst, not openly by daylight,
But with base subterfuge and craft unknighly,
Steal a great treasure from him, which to name
He thinks unseemly ; but for which he lived,
And is prepared to die. There lies his gage !
At any hour, in any place, by day
Or night, in France or England, he will meet thee,
And prove his words upon thy recreant body.”
He drew his clashing gauntlet off, and paused

18. *The Story of Queen Isabel.*

As if about to hurl it at the king,
Who shrank and raised his hand. The herald
 laugh'd,
And flung it at his feet. King John, being safe,
Sneer'd as he answer'd,—“ Go, and tell thy lord
That if he is so lavish of his blood,
I will appoint a man to fight with him,
He is too small for me. Let the glove lie.”
This to his knights, who all had drawn their swords,
And were contending which should lift the glove,
After the English manner; knowing not
The cause of strife, but eager to be in it.
Thus curb'd, they follow him with frowning eyes
And fingers restless at their hilts; but he
Cried, “ Now to tennis !” and broke up the court
As lightly as a maid. The queen stood still
Like one who hath been struck, who knows not yet
Where is the blow, or what the pain, but feels
A certain chillness in the heart and brain,
As if life paused a little while and doubted
Whether it should resume its course. But then,
As a branch stoops with over-weight of snow,
Lets down its burden, and starts back again
Noiselessly and unwounded to its place,

She dropp'd the cold oppression from her heart,
And rose, and seem'd unscathed. The herald faced
her,

Reading her with his eyes, they two alone,
Till, like a whirlwind, sprang the wrathful king
Back to her side, and caught her by the wrist,
With, "Madam, came this messenger for you?
What? Will you shame me here before my court?
Hence! to your chamber!" Not a step she moved,
But, when he loosed his grasp, she laid her hands
Upon his breast, and pierced him with her eyes,
And whisper'd, "Shall men say you were afraid?"
"Why, aye, my love, they must an if they list,"
He answer'd lightly, in a heartless jest
Quenching his ire. "And if you want a hero,
You should have stay'd beside the Marcher Hugh,
Who hath a gift that way. He does not risk
So great a kingdom and so fair a wife,
And can be valiant at a cheaper rate."
Mocking, he went. Her maidens gather'd round
To lead her in, but with a cry, she cast
Her face upon the bosom of Isaure;
A cry, as of a woman robb'd and wrong'd
Who knows her rage is helpless, and consents
To her despair.

Not undeceived at once
Do hearts give up their idols ; many shifts
They try to cheat themselves ; and, oft repulsed,
Creep back like beaten slaves. Blank wonder first,
Then unbelief and obstinate confusion ;
Then, shock by shock, resisted horror came
Slowly, with many an after-thought of how
And why the vileness was not what it seem'd,
And hers the blunder, but not his the shame.
But in a year the lesson was complete ;
Henceforth the lustre of her youth and crown
Shone on a widow's brow for evermore.
Yet, half a child, she found a foolish charm
In gems and unfamiliar gauds of state,
And the mere marvel of her loveliness ;
Or drugg'd herself with pleasure, till she saw
Only unreal shapes and fantasies,
And, for a space, forgot the Facts of life.
In such brief intervals her anguish slept,
Then sprang on her refresh'd. Meantime, her heart
Kept still an inner chamber, whose barr'd door
She dared not open, but within there dwelt
A Memory and a Name. As piece by piece,
And hue by hue, the glories and the gifts


Wherewith her blind belief had robed the King
Were rent away, they pass'd within that door,
And gather'd round that Name and Memory,
And were in their own place. She knew them there,
But tried to keep the secret from herself,
And would not look upon them.

This dark year

Was spent in England, where the people loved
To look on her great beauty, and believed
She must be happy, being born in France,
And yet so blest as to be Queen of England.
They served her with a blunter courtesy
Than her own race, yet would have died for her
Under less challenge. Shrinkingly she felt
The keenness of their island atmosphere,
Where every deed must bear the test of scorn,
Ere it have leave to call itself a deed ;
And marvell'd at achievements, where attempts
Were so discouraged. Such a discipline
Makes greatness surly, so inured to strife,
That scarcely is it capable of peace ;
But such a discipline makes greatness strong.
Under its knife the weaker buds fall off
And perish, while the central stem is left
Bare, but gigantic.

When the year was gone,
The king went back to France. A blacker time
Drew nigh ; we need not tell in English ears
The story of Prince Arthur. Day by day
Heard Isabel how Hugh de Lusignan
Was as a sword in royal Arthur's hand,
And in his breast a soul ; the noise of fame
Filling the general ear, had still for her
His accents, and she knew his master-touch
In each great deed, each page of chivalry,—
Fresh wreaths to fling before that secret shrine,
From which she turn'd away her face. At last
One drop of old Plantagenet was found
Lurking in John's cold veins, and his heart beat,
For just a moment, with the lion-pulse
Of his dead brother. England answer'd it,
And, with a bound, brought down the foe. The
queen
Heard in her bower at Rouen, and went forth
With thoughts unspoken burning on her cheeks
To greet the victor, who, exhausted, came
From his first conquest, bringing in his train
One captive, stately in his first defeat.

A three weeks' royal progress through the land
They went, with palfreys and with pursuivants ;
Free banners waved, and clarions spake to lutes,
And silken splendours made the winding roads
Rivers of gems and flowers. Each morn the queen
Did poise the airy grandeur of her shape
On a new steed ; the wayside seem'd all eyes,
The wind all acclamation. Proud she sate,
And with a forward gaze that never swerved,
Greeted the crowds to come, but scarcely seem'd
To see them when they pass'd. Behind her rode
A great array of cavaliers and dames,
And after them the captives, two and two,
Chain'd in vile tumbrils, twenty gallant knights
To swell the pomp, and show the doubting world
That even King John had won a battle once.
Bareheaded, in their stain'd and batter'd mail,
Ashamed, as beaten soldiers are ashamed,
Haggard with wrath, and hunger, and disdain,
Each man of them look'd twice as much a king
As their soft captor. Never saw the queen
A face among them, for she fear'd too much
To see the face of One ; but evermore
A dream of pallid heroes vex'd her soul ;



Till, having sigh'd through many restless nights,
She could endure no more, but suddenly
Wroth that her asking eyes had no response,
Cried, "Have you seen him?" to fond false Isaure,
Who knew her drift, but would not seem to know it,
Dreading the end, and so made doubtful answer :
"Seen whom? The king?" Girl Isabel, abash'd,
Turn'd from her and was dumb. Your foot may
quench

A feeble flame; but if the flame be strong,
Trodden, it starts anew. For two days more
The trouble smoulder'd, then broke out again.
The page who led her palfrey (one more Spring
Had touch'd his brow than hers), who worshipp'd
her

With tender desperation, like a boy,
Seeking no guerdon but a smile, and dying
In fancy for that guerdon thrice a day,
Mark'd every flush that cross'd her fading cheek,
And silently beset her as she went
With ceaseless proffers of himself. At last,
She bade him fetch a cup of wine, and he
Giving it, breathless, to her hand, was brought
Close to her, and could feel the faintest air

That pass'd her lips ; then she, who did not know
She was about to speak till she had spoken,
Said, " Would the captive knights were so re-
fresh'd ! "

And put the goblet from her with a sigh.
Then for a week he walk'd beside her rein
With tidings in his face, but never spoke,
Until he heard her jesting with her maids,
Saying, she prized a book above a friend,
Because it talk'd to her when she was mute ;
" But a queen's friend," she said, " is ever mute
Till the queen talks." When next he lifted her
Upon her steed, he said, " They thank your Grace
For daily benefits." The colour rush'd
Out of her face. That white and speechless answer
Was all she gave ; and through that summer's day
She look'd not on him once. Next morn, her hand
Trembled a little on his arm ; he felt,
And answer'd, " 'Tis your mercy spares their lives ;
For wounds, and weariness, and scanty food
Were slaying them before." Too young she was
To keep her marble majesty unmoved,
And at these words she wept. 'Twas well for him
The king rode up just then. A moment more,

And his mad pity had betray'd them both.
Thenceforward, duly with the morn, he spoke.
Like a wild deer, which, being tamed, looks first
And flies, then looks and lingers, and at last
Looks and draws near, she learn'd to meet his eyes
And bear them, and at last respond to them ;
A glance, a tear of thanks, a word of ruth,
No more ; nor ever pass'd a name her lips
Nor his—he ignorant, and she afraid.
He, counting all for common tenderness
Of natural pity, pour'd alike on all ;
She, owning nought but pity to herself,
Not owning that she pitied all for one.
And thus again to England, whose white cliffs
Seem'd once like bridal draperies, but now
Merely like shrouds of death. The captives went
To their own places ; to their separate glooms,
Uncheer'd by glance, or hand, or hope ; to brood
On those impossible glories of the past,
When they might touch the grass, and see the sky,
And do the work of men. But manly work
Is sometimes in a prison, where no fault
Has cast a great one, for his greatness smitten ;
Where his calm eyes, not troubled by mere pain,

Look through a past so glorious and so pure,
That, crown'd by its undying light, he seems
To wear his sorrow like a monarch's robe.
There shall the love of nations cleave to him,
And men shall watch his prison as they watch
A beacon in the tempest, teaching them
By its true fire, the way that they should go.
His name shall be the trophy of his age,
When one man lived who lived not for himself,
But only for his country.

On the queen

Great darkness settled. First, the common air
Groan'd with the death of Arthur. No man told
The news before her, but it came to her
Silently, like a breath of pestilence,
Sapping her life. She ask'd not, but she knew
How it befell; and shudder'd when she took
Her place beside her lord, and ever dream'd,
Through all the senseless splendours of her court,
Of lonely cells, to which that news must come,
Breaking brave hearts. Then tardily came up
Vague notes of scatter'd sorrow from those cells,
And here and there she heard how one was dead,
Dying of grief, or want, or solitude,

Men said not which. As one who walks the shore
After a tempest, where a wreck hath been,
And knows that one he loved was in the ship,
And sees the blind sea cast her corpses up,
And dares not lift the tangle from the face
Lest he should see the face he fears to see ;
But lingers near, until some passer says,
By such a sign, or such, it is not he,
Then to the next goes, trembling—so she heard
Each death ; and, fearing till she heard the name,
Pass'd on to a new fear. At last her heart
Gave way within her, and she sought a place
To weep, and there she communed with herself.

“ Shall this go on for ever ? Can a child
(I was no more) have leave to bar itself
From all fair heritage of life ? My youth
Lies spread before me like a desert. There
I must walk on until I meet with death,
And never stay my feet nor slake my thirst,
Nor look a moment in the face of hope—
And yet I had it !—Ah ! woe's me, I had it,
And flung it from me ! Can a worse sin be
Than scorn and loathing in the place of love ?

Is it not sin to live so join'd to sin
You needs must drink its breath? Aye, tis pollution!
God's law not kept for fear it should be broken,
Once boldly broken, may be kept for ever;
And liberty, and love, and heavenly peace,
Make Eden in my heart. To save a life—
Why, that's plain virtue! I can save two lives;
One from the prison and the tomb, and one
From a worse prison and a deeper tomb,
And the slow shame of everlasting chains.
A name withholds me—but the name shall break,
And let me through to bliss!" Word rush'd on
word,

Like troops that storm a breach. The breach was
storm'd.

There is but little swiftness in the world;
A good deed lags, and loses half its grace
By being long'd for. But this sudden thought
Went like a shaft of passion to its aim,
Nor swerved nor falter'd, when the string was
loosed.

Much favour'd her. The king was gone. Few
guards

Cumber'd the summer palace where she dwelt,
And these loved her, loathed him, and would have
kept

Her secret, had she told it. What they guess'd
They told not to each other. So she went
Unquestion'd through the twilight, and appear'd
Like a new star before that faithful page,
Who served her still ; stood close, and spake to
him :—

“ Get me a page's dress and two good steeds ;
That to my chamber, these beneath yon walls
To wait my bidding !” Speaking, she was gone.
He dazzled, but not doubting, did her hest,
And with the steeds kept watch beneath the moon,
His pacing steps as patient as his heart.

At night a boy sprang down the palace stair,
Out on the pale grass where the moonlight moves,
And shot into the darkness of the trees,
Fearing his shadow like a stranger. On
He crept, and paused beside the prison walls,
And scared the soldier with a shower of gems,
Crying, “ Take these, and fly.” Among the dew
They lay, and mock'd but could not match its
lustre ;

Aghast, the man stoop'd down to gather them,
Nor touch'd the bounteous vision, who pass'd by,
Under the portal, up the vaulted gloom,
Even to the hopeless dungeon door, so barr'd
It scarcely seem'd to need its sentinel.
Here flash'd a ruby through the lamp's dim light;
"Take this, and fly, and leave thy keys with me."
A pause show'd doubt—and then a diamond fell
Worth a king's ransom. "Nay, fear nothing, friend!
Go and be rich. The keys!" What sudden worlds
Of rest and splendour bribe the weary slave
From his hired faith! With weaker waves, perhaps,
He might have fought—this torrent sweeps him
down—

Yet some rough conscience made him wait to lift
The massy bars; then ruefully, like one
Who never thought to come to such a pass,
But has no choice, he shakes his shaggy head,
And turns to grasp his fortune. Through the door
Went Isabel, and drew her page's cloak
Around her, and trod softly, and stood still,
Shrinking and shaking in the prison twilight;
Till, as her guarded and luxurious eyes,
Not with such shades familiar, by degrees

Learn'd a new power of sight, she was aware
Of reeking walls unwindow'd, rusty chains
Broken, and in the grey gloom farther off
A quiet man asleep upon the floor.
How quiet ! can this be death ? She draws more
near,

Scarce breathing. No ! the slumber of a child.
She grasps her fiery heart and holds it down ;
“ O, couldst *thou* beat as softly !” On his face,
Bare to the lamp, a little worn and pale,
The habit of heroic thought was fix'd,
And could not be misread. It spakè to her
With such a revelation in its speech
That she beheld herself for what she was,
And what she should have been. Ah, pity her,
Not him ; shame strikes her down—she kneels—
she falls—

And stifles all her sobs against the ground.
Gives but a moment to her swift remorse,
And grudges that—unworthy even to breathe
The air his presence purifies. She prays
That if he grace her with a passing thought,
He may believe her virtuous, and not dream
How base a hope beguiled her. Was it hope ?

Now seems it on the other side o' the earth,
Farther and worse than death. But there is work
To do for him ; that comfort she may take
To bind about the torture of her life—
A little dew upon a burning wound.
She dares not touch him : when she fits the key
Into his chain she blushes ; when he wakes
She is about to fly ; but stops herself,
And stands before him like a criminal
Without a voice.

He rose and stretch'd his hand
For the familiar hilt, then smiled to think
How slow he was to learn that it was gone ;
The loosen'd fetters, dropping as he rose,
Rang on the stone ; below the flickering lamp
Stood a pale stripling in a page's cloak ;
The door was open—with a stride that smack'd
Of freedom, he has reach'd it—then he turn'd
And his eye rested on the cowering boy,
And, half ashamed of strange discourtesy,
He said, " A captive soon forgets his manners ;
Pardon, I pray you. What's your will with me ?"
" Only to set you free." The murmur came
Feebly through folded hands, and, when he moved

Nearer, the hands were raised. "Nay, fear me not,"
He said, with that majestic gentleness
Which was his way. "If you would hide your face
I will not try to see it. Let me thank you.
I think I feel a breeze upon my cheek
Not from these charnel vaults; a breeze that brings
Some message from the forests. I am free.
I never was a captive. I take up
My freedom where I left it, and efface
The fever-dream, and wake. Is it for pity
That I must thank you?" "By the western tower,"
She answer'd, seeming not to heed his words,
"Your steed awaits you." Secretly she thought,
"O! when he finds two steeds will he discern
My purpose, and disdain me?" "Thanks again,"
He said, "but must I take no name with me
For blessing in my prayers?" At this a wish
Heaved in her troubled breast, and forced its way.
"It was the Queen," she said, "who sent me here."
Then such a sudden light of tenderness
Fill'd all his face, and glisten'd in his eyes,
That she, resisting this, felt she was made
More worthy of him, and was comforted.
He did not speak at first, and then she saw

A little cloud of unresented wrongs
Pass over that pure light, and then he spoke ;
“ My homage and deep thanks attend the Queen,
That of her mercy she remember’d me.”
He turn’d to go, and she stood still, in soul
Clasping his knees for pardon. Once again
He spoke, now trembling. “ Boy, you serve the
Queen ;
I would,—I would I knew that she was happy.”
Here that undying woman-pride which fights
In noble natures to the last, and falls
Veiling its face from him who strikes it down,
That fault, which hath the form and force of virtue,
Sprang up in her and spoke. “ She hath her choice,
She must be happy.” And they parted so.

The King came back to find his captive fled,
And his rage baffled by wild tales of ghosts
Who broke the dungeon doors, and loosed the chains,
And stood, disguised as pages, under walls
Holding swift horses. If he guess’d the truth
He show’d it not, though in his eyes there lurk’d
Strange subtle lights whene’er that trusty page
Led the Queen’s steed. He kept his vengeance cold

Till it was wanted. He was busy, too,
With a new love, and hardly graced his wife
With such poor homage as concealment pays.
But into Isabel's deserted life
Had come a burst of sunshine, and the waste
Shone with a mirage. All her griefs forgot,
Her faults self-pardon'd, and her wrongs unfelt,
Watching two little tender veils lift up
From two soft violet-buds. O ! new-born eyes !
Through you the mother sees awhile, and loses
Her proper vision. Vague and beautiful
The sweet world shines on her as on her babe,
And she remembers in it nothing wrong,
Sees nothing sorrowful. The day must come
When wrong and sorrow shall be multiplied
By myriad terrors ; her bare heart the shield
To keep those eyes from once beholding them.

Three years she kept her treasure—a girl-babe,
Unwelcome, yet beloved—three peaceful years
Snatch'd from the course of tumult, like a nook
Of quiet water in a rushing stream,
Where foam-bells drift and cluster, while the waves
Eddy around and break below, yet leave

The little nest inviolate. Meantime
The gradual strength of England built itself
Into a tower for ever ; and the day
Drew on, when feeble tyranny should fall
Against that tower and break. But this, not yet.
The King in dalliance steep'd his soul, and left
His wife and people to their separate works ;
One only murmur cross'd the Queen's calm life
And touch'd her cloister'd heart with pangs of joy ;
That the late captive, taking back to him
The lordship of his valour, had achieved
New greatness, and had join'd himself in peace
To England, doing service for the King.
“ Was this for me ? ” she thought, then hid her eyes
In her babe's bosom, leaving there the thought.

Among her maids she work'd, when sudden feet
Rang all along the stairs, the doors gaped wide,
And, with a train of state, unheralded,
The King strode in. No prouder thing on earth
Was seen than her humility. She rose
For due obeisance, and her cheek was stone
When his lips laugh'd against it. There he stood,
And something in his smile was terrible,

Like slow fulfilment of a doom. The child
Slept near ; she stood before it, and put back
A hurried hand, and hid it with a scarf,
As if unconscious. Smiling still, he spoke,
“ Madam, your daughter is betroth’d to-day.
The Marcher, Hugh de Lusignan, hath woo’d her
And got her for his wife, with my consent ;
And, as you know of old, it is his fashion
To train his wives, he hath demanded her,
And she must go to him across the seas.
Joy to his work, and patience ; he will be
A sober bridegroom, when she’s fit to wed.
Will you not wish them joy ? She sails to-night
She clung about his knees and kiss’d his feet,
Suing him like a god ; his silence seem’d
Like mercy to her—it was only triumph.
This prostrate passion of her vain despair
Was what he sought. It is not good to look
Upon her anguish. When her swoon was past
And past some weeks of fever, she rose up
To stagger faintly through the blank of life,
Blind, wistful, hopeless ; ever in her heart,
A dumb reproach, and in her eyes a loss,
And in her voice a secrecy of tears.

She ask'd, as once before, "Was this for me?"
And thought the vengeance hard, but had not
 strength
To plead against it, even with herself.
And still she sigh'd when other babes were given
To love but not to joy. They seem'd like ghosts,
And every movement scared her with remembrance.
She could not love another like the first,
Which open'd all the softness of her heart.

On stole the sombre years. The people saw
Her proud, fair face, and knew not what it mask'd ;
Sometimes she graced the court beside her lord,
And sometimes dwelt in private ; either way
Alike to her ; she did as she was told.
One little draught of pity at her lips
She did not spurn, but drank, and was refresh'd.
The page, now grown a knight, and faithful still,
Still claiming nothing but the leave to love,
Was near her daily, and encounter'd her
With such poor comfort as his truth could give.
The King look'd on and was content. At last
There went a poisonous whisper through the land,
And dogged men, who scorn'd their caitiff lord,

Thought still his wife was bound to honour him ;
And she, who guess'd not why they scowl'd at her,
Found greater comfort in the only eyes
That met her kindly ; so the whisper grew ;
And when the deadly fruit was ripe, it fell.

One summer's day she rode to join the King
At his new palace, where he summon'd her ;
And, wearily dismounting, to resume
The chains a little while laid by, she read
Such truth and pity in those loyal eyes,
That her stray hand fell lightly on his brow
Bent to her stirrup, and she spake and sigh'd,—
“ Friend, pray for me, I need it !” All in tears
He turn'd away ; and she, with tears, went in ;
Watch'd from a window by her lord, who show'd
The gesture to his train, and bade them mark ;
Then greeted her so gaily, that she knew
He had some bitter purpose in his soul.

Beside her at the banquet, still he show'd
Unwonted homage, but her shuddering looks
Could nowhere find a substance for their fear ;
(She noted not the absence of her knight.)

She waited till the long carouse was done,
Then, at his signal, rose. "Your cheeks are pale,
My queen," he said, "sleep must their springtide
prove,

To make them bloom anew. Give me your hand.
I'll see you to your chamber." So they went
Together, with a train to marshall them.

The chamber was a blaze of light; the King
Stood still a moment by the curtain'd couch,
Holding her hand, and looking in her face,
As a wolf eyes the fawn before he springs,
Then dropp'd her hand, and drew the curtain back,
And hiss'd into her ear, "Your rest be soft!"

—This is no bed; it is an open tomb.

Upon the pillow lies the dumb despair

Of a familiar face without a soul,

A loyal breast, uncover'd and transfix'd,

And under the close dagger-hilt a stain

Slow spreading while they gazed. The Queen

knelt down

Without a cry; kiss'd the wan brow, and said,

"O! my one friend, slain only for my love,

Happier than I, whom hate disdains to slay,

I will be true to thee as thou to me.

True, for thy living homage dared no more,
Than thy dead hand, to harm me. Fare thee well.
Be glad that thou hast served me in thy death,
Setting me free ; for, henceforth, never more
Will I be made a pageant ; never more
Shall this my spousal crown, defiled with blood,
Press my poor brows ; and when my place is void,
Thy murderer shall not dare to ask the cause.
It is for me a kind of liberty
To seem henceforth the hapless thing I am,
And, in the prison of my private grief,
Weep for my child, and thee, and one besides."

Forth with these words she went ; the men stood
by,
To let her pass ; the women knelt and wept ;
For the last act of such a tragedy
Was in her face, they could not choose but weep.
It seem'd as if the curtains of her heart
Were lifted, like the curtains of that couch,
To show a corpse. The very king himself
Trembled, and turn'd away his eyes in fear.
Henceforward, as she said, she dwelt apart ;
And some believed she was a faithless wife,

Judged by her conscience, left unscathed for ruth ;
Some knew her wrongs, and faintly pitied her
As men will pity woes they cannot help,
Desiring to forget them. Solitude
Gave her no comfort, only gave her time
For the slow, fruitless fever of regret
To prey upon her life ; such grief as her's
Is never soften'd ; flowers that grace a grave
Die in the hot air of a sick man's room,
Where fear and hope and longing banish peace.
These were the days when England built her tower,
She knowing not, nor heeding. If she heard
Aught of the tumult of the popular hope,
It seem'd to her like voices in a storm
To men whose ship is sinking, far at sea ;
As they go down they hear but do not heed.
At last there came a voice which startled her,
And she stood breathless ; through the land it went,
A murmur, then a trumpet, then a shout,—
“ The king is dead.”

Due forms of widowhood
Fulfill'd in patience, as a debt to God,
Not man, because God's seal was on the chain
Now sever'd ; she put by her royal state,

And hurried, like a pardon'd exile, home.
There did the ghost of childhood meet with her
And stretch its arms to welcome her again,
A gentle spectre, but a sorrowful
Because so joyous once. But not for that
She came—a living childhood summon'd her ;
Faint with a six years' fast, the mother's heart
Hunger'd, yet fear'd to satisfy its hunger.
She sent a herald with a humble word
Might she not see her child ? She did not ask
To break the treaty ; this was not a claim,
It was a prayer. She would not keep her long,
Nor seek her often ; for a little while
She pray'd that she might sometimes see her child,
Just long enough to clasp her, just to quench
The fever of her lips on that fresh cheek,
To know her face and shape, and mark the growth
Which happier eyes had watch'd. Unconsciously
The supplication strengthen'd to reproach
Which she drew back, and said she was content,
He must not think she murmur'd ; she was glad
To know her daughter in such noble hands ;
And there she ceased. But when the messenger
Was gone, she trembled, and would fetch him back

And write her embassy in softer phrase
Lest it should fail ; and then she fear'd anew
And made it prouder, lest she should be shamed
By some misjudgment. While she waver'd thus
And wept, because the ruthless hours rush'd on,
And still her arms were vacant, in the room
A voice said, " Mother : " 'twas the melody
Of her own heart, grown vocal in her ears,—
Aye, and the dream was palpable ! It stood
Before her, and came near, and touch'd her hand
So timidly—with moist and wistful eyes,
Not knowing why they wept, and looking at her
As if from a babe's face ; remember'd eyes,
That almost seem'd—but that was fantasy—
As if they too remember'd. Love and Death
Were mingled for a moment in the cry,
The plunge, the anguish of that first embrace !
But then she lifts the sweet face from her heart,
Puts back the golden curls, and kisses them ;
Reads all the features, and remembers them ;
Weeps, wonders, laughs, and makes her rapture soft,
Lest it should scare the child, and turns away
To hide it, and comes back in sudden fear
Lest she should lose a moment of her bliss.

Then, with caressing hands upon her cheeks
Afraid to loose their hold, she questions her.
How came she here? "Oh, mother! I was brought."
And was she happy? Silent wonder gave
Full answer, for she knew not what it was
Not to be happy. "Didst thou know my face?
Why seem'd I not a stranger?" Here she drew
A picture from the white deep of her breast,
And show'd it. "Long ago he gave me this,
And bade me never miss to look at it
Before my daily prayers. I never did."
There Isabel beheld her own fair face,
Seen somewhat nearer to the dewy light
Of morn, but not more beautiful than now,
A little languid with the heats of noon.
She did not ask who gave it, but she blush'd.
Out of the same soft nest the same small hand
Drew a new treasure. "Mother, I was told
To give you this. I had well nigh forgot."
She laid the message on her mother's knee,
A spray of wither'd myrtle, like a spell
To summon sights before the fixing eyes.

She fingers it; and *how* she looks at it!

And sees a castle doorway, and a face
Half light, half shadow, sorrowful, and proud,
And gentle—and a lattice—and a hand
That flings a myrtle spray, not wither'd then,
No, then a summer bud. “He went away!”
She says and weeps, “Ah me! he went away!
And I—I was not there when he came back!
O! if I had been there when he came back!”
Her thoughts destroy the Past, and grasp her life
At that far point, and mould it into bliss,
Sad still-born bliss, that might have been, and was
not!

And she looks up, as if to wring from heaven
Some medicine for the weariness of hope;
Looks up, and sees a face, now all in light,
And drops herself upon a ready breast,
And feels the circle of protecting arms,
And through the dream of that delicious rest
Fearing to wake, she hears a living voice,
“Lo, now I am come back, and thou art here!”

CAVOUR.

I MET a woman, weeping by the sea,
Not patiently, as women sit and weep,
But running, white with passion, wild with fear,
And as she ran she cried, "Cavour is dead!"
And cast the grey sea-sand upon her hair,
And cried, beating her breast, "Cavour is dead!"
Was any near him? Tell me how he look'd
When they came in and said that he must die?
Must shut the casket, open in his hand,
Whose wealth he had seen, not touch'd! Did not
the gloom
Of that immense regret, shared by the world,
Trouble his closing eyes; or were they void?
Void as the place he leaves among the powers!
In stifled murmurs from the watching crowd,
A sea of heads, still as that other sea
When it awaits the tempest, he might hear
The first pathetic note of his own dirge,
Soon to swell out in thunder through the world
Vast sobs of grief, cleft by some clarion-tones

From foes who kept their silence while he lived ;
Ah, let them be content ; they broke his heart,—
He died of Villafranca !”

Here she paused,
And hid her face. But when I ask'd her name
She did not tell it, but she turn'd upon me,
And fronted me as stately and as pale
As the moon stood on Ajalon, and waited
For the first shout of conquest ; so she show'd
The fatal gift of beauty in her face,
And all the tearful traces of the Past ;
And I beheld her while she answer'd me.
“ I am his Widow. Do not look at me
With that familiar pity, which was mine
Before he lived, but never while he lived :
I have forgotten how to suffer pity.
I am his Widow : bring me to his grave !
I think I shall not die upon his grave,
But, when I take my place, and wear my crown,
And the world wonders, men shall stoop to read,
Upon the topmost step of my great throne,
An epitaph—‘ Here lies Cavour ; a man
Who built the throne of Italy, and died.’”

GARIBALDI AT VARIGNANO.

NEVER subdued till now,
 Wounded perhaps to death,
 Did Italy strike the blow ?
 Say it under your breath !
 She struck him ; we strive in vain
 To cover the pain, the shame,—
 She struck him who struck not again,
 But fell while shouting her name.

See he is sleeping at last,
 How can you wish him to wake ?
 Can you give him back to his Past,
 Crush'd by your hand, for your sake ?
 True to the king he has braved,
 And who mourns him, misled, undone,
 Chain'd on the soil he saved,
 And conquer'd at last, by his own !

Write this conquest in tears,
 And let its record be dim ;

Hide this year from the stainless years
Which had each a wreath for him,—
And tell him, there as he lies,
He is still our darling chief,
And never shame shall touch his name,
But only love and grief.

Blame his error, and then
Blush while his deeds you tell;
Guard his prison, Italian men,
For whom his name is a spell;
Breathe his sentence, thou land!
Of which he is still the pride,
Sign it, oh! brother-hand,
Which fought so long by his side!

Italy, royal and free,
Forget not the means in the end!
And, King, if this thy rebel be,
Tell us, who is thy friend?
Hide him a little time
And bear it! The day shall come
For counting his generous crime
Among the steps to Rome.

Italy, blood like this
Should make thee pure as strong ;
Italy, hearts like his
Are precious even in wrong.
The heroes of Europe scan,
And lift up thy head, and boast
Thy TRAITOR is the truest man
Of all the glorious host.



AN ANNIVERSARY.

SEPTEMBER 7, 1860.

ON the seventh of September, two little years
gone by,
For Naples freed by one man's deed, rejoicings
shook the sky ;
There were banners from all windows, and flowers
beneath all feet,
And a whirl of happy faces as he rode up the street ;
No crown, except his glory, was on his brow that
day,
He toil'd, he fought, he conquer'd—to give a crown
away.
A soldier stands beside him, as friend by friend
should stand,
And takes the crown so conquer'd, and grasps the
gallant hand.
“Shout for royal Victor ! let your *vivas* ring !
Shout for Garibaldi, greater than a king !”

SEPTEMBER 7, 1862.

ON the seventh of September, in this dreariest
of years,
Darkness covers Naples, and the cloud must break
in tears.

All hearts are with their hero, in solitude and gloom
Captive to the king he crown'd, waiting for his doom.
Oh ! does he watch the morning, and do his eyes
again

Faintly flash in triumph, before they close in pain ?
And in the palace at Turin are eyes this morning wet ?
All Italy remembers, and can her King forget ?
Henceforth can any glory, can Rome, can Venice
hide

One pale heroic Shadow for ever by his side ;
And, in his ears one bitter cry, piercing all joyful
sounds—

“ Think on Garibaldi, dying of his wounds ! ”



GARIBALDI IMPEACHED.

SEPTEMBER, 1862.

WHERE shall we try Garibaldi?
 Find us some Italian town
 Not alive with his renown,
 Where the air is not on flame
 With the splendour of his name,
 Where the pavement of the street
 Would not rise to kiss his feet,
 Not till such a place is found,
 Try him on Italian ground !

What men shall judge Garibaldi?
 Men whose honour is not stain'd
 When this Captive stands arraign'd,
 Through whose souls the trumpet-blast
 Of his story never pass'd,
 Men of stone, without a tear,
 Men who can neither see nor hear ;
 Find us such, but not till then
 Try him by Italian men !

THREE VOICES.

WHAT saith the Past to thee? Weep!
Truth is departed!

Beauty hath died like the dream of a sleep,
Love is faint-hearted.

Trifles of sense, the profoundly unreal,
Scare from our spirits God's holy ideal;
So, like a funeral bell slow and deep,
So tolls the Past to thee,—Weep!

How speaks the Present hour? Act!
Toil without ceasing!

So shall thy footsteps by glory be track'd,
Slow, but increasing.

Scorn not the smallness of daily endeavour,
Let the great meaning ennoble it ever,
Droop not o'er efforts expended in vain,
Work, as believing that labour is gain.

What doth the Future say? Hope!
Walk upward glancing!



See where light fringes the far-rising slope ;

Day is advancing.

Not for a moment despair of the Right ;

Nothing can hinder the passing of night !

Not for a moment make peace with the wrong,

Fear not man's weakness when God is so strong !



THE HERMIT OF GIBRALTAR.

(A TRUE STORY.)

HE died among the flowers, when dawn was
leaping

Like a freed lion through the sever'd east ;
'Twere but a waste of tears to mourn him, sleeping
White-hair'd and calm, his Bible on his breast.

A poor old man—so runs the touching story—
Lay at the point of death, and vow'd, in prayer,
To do some work for God His Saviour's glory,
If he were given back to this dear air.

He was made whole ; and, walking forth at even,
Found rapture in the sky, the shore, the sea ;
And thought it passing strange that earth and heaven
Should welcome him with such a jubilee.

Unseen he climb'd the rock by paths forbidden,
And found a terrace, till that hour untrod,
And there began to frame a garden, hidden
From human eyes, and only meant for God.

There was no witness to his happy working,
Save one mute Rose, unwearied watcher sweet,
And nightingales among the shadows lurking,
Waiting till he should rear them temples meet.

No hand gave aid, no eye beheld him wander,
Day after day with some fresh pleasant freight;
Myrtle or jasmine, royal oléander,
Or maiden lily, or mere violet;

Till, like the work within that makes us holy
By secret tears, and prayers, and toilsome hours,
Not suddenly, but tenderly and slowly,
The heart of stone became a nest of flowers;

And sometimes, wafted to the pacing warden
Like notes of broken music on the breeze,
Faint odours, from the roses in the garden
Came, blent with breathings of the orange-trees.

Even so, perhaps—we little know how often—
The fragrance of some unsuspected prayer,
May steal about us on our path, and soften
The harsher touches of life's common air.

At length one follow'd on the viewless traces
From scent to scent, and started to detect
That fair flower-city in the rock's embraces,
One grey-hair'd man, king, guardian, architect.

The soldier had no choice, he dared not pardon,
But took him from the haunt of peaceful years,
Sad as that exile from a fairer garden,
Who first unlock'd for earth the fount of tears.

A voice from every leafy depth upbraided,
A murmur from each bell, and star, and urn ;
"How can'st thou take him ere our bloom is faded ?
We have such treasures for him still ! Return !"

He went in grief ; but every heart uncloses
When the sweet story of his toil is known ;
And they restored him to his longing roses,
And gave him all the garden for his own.

A little chapel in the midst was builded,
Fretted and gemm'd by Nature's lavish hand,
With traceries flung from leaf and flower, and gilded
By the perpetual sunlight of the land.

There would he sit, and dream of flowers immortal
 Crowning pale foreheads with their glorious
 bloom,
Not gather'd in the garden at his portal,
 But from a garden with a sealèd tomb.

And once they came to take him home at even ;
 But "let me sleep here once !" he gently said,
And laid him down between the flowers and heaven,
 And there they found him in the morning, dead.

None knew how Death came to him—softly, stilly,
 It sought him in the silence of the night,
As the dew falls upon a closing lily,
 Infusing life, and making meet for light.

But still his garden stands, a solemn pleasaunce
 Where languid hearts may breathe a little balm,
And still it seems alive with the mute presence
 Of that past life, so innocent and calm.

There the transparent stillness woos reflection,
 There our repenting thoughts forgive the past,
And cleanse the finer links of tried affection,
 If they be dimm'd by Time's corroding blast.

There may we pray that when Death's hour hath
found us,

We may lie down, like him, to happy rest ;
Daybreak above, life's song and fragrance round us,
And God's dear Word upon each faithful breast.



FOR MUSIC.

WEEP not for death,
 'Tis but a fever still'd,
 A pang suppress'd, a fear at rest,
 A solemn hope fulfill'd ;
 The moonlight on the sea asleep
 Is not more calm : why shouldst thou weep ?

Weep, weep, for change,
 For gleams that fade in shining,
 For hope's first fear, for joy's first tear,
 For strong love's slow declining.
 Morn's lightest shadow on the seas
 Tell us of midnight : weep for these !

Weep not for death,
 The fount of tears is seal'd ;
 Who knows how bright the inward light
 To those shut eyes reveal'd !
 Who knows what cloudless peace may fill
 The heart which seems so cold and still !

Weep, weep, for life,
For smiles that end in sighing,
For love whose quest hath never rest,
For worn hearts hourly dying ;
Weep not, when silence locks the breath,
Life is the bitterness of death !



A SEA-SIDE FANCY.

A CHILD stood by the rising sea
On a dismal winter's morning,
And dream'd what coming life might be,
And sigh'd o'er the voice of warning.

The distant shores with snow were white,
Grey shadows scatter'd o'er them,
And a tawny sail had caught the light,
As it slowly pass'd before them.

But the broken gleams went trembling by,
Pallid, and cold, and frail,
Like sleet-drops loosen'd from the sky,
And dying upon the gale.

“O ! will my joys, thus dim and few,
By gathering tears half-drown'd,
Gild but a passing shape or two,
And deepen the darkness round ?

“ With mast aslope and with curving sheet
Two barks are scudding fast ;
They pause, they turn, they seem to greet,
Then flit in a moment past.

“ Will Love and Hope thus swiftly dart
O'er my cheerless, cold existence,
Doom'd, even ere they meet, to part,
And speaking but from a distance ?

“ Will Thought be wing'd by Memory,
Like the flight of yon wheeling bird,
Which still comes back with a plaintive cry
To the spot whence first it stirr'd ?

“ Will the voice that breathes in my heart's deep
cells
Be like this murmuring sea ;
A ceaseless voice, but which never swells
To a perfect melody ?

“ And, as men watch yon rocking boat
While it changes from light to dark,
Will they watch my life as it lies afloat,
While I shiver and toil in the bark ?

“ And will that bark on the billows slide
Adrift, a helpless wreck—”

Child ! thou hast dream'd by a rising tide,
And the wave is at thy neck.

O ! may thy strife be quickly o'er,
And when the waves retreat,
O ! may'st thou lie on a pleasant shore
With flowers about thy feet !

Or if the cold wind still must blow,
And the winter sky frown o'er thee,
May sunset turn yon heights of snow
Into lamps of living glory !



ONE AND ANOTHER.

THEY had been much together, and one for
ever bears

A name upon the loyal heart, and in the daily
prayers ;

The other but remembers when the pleasant hours
are past,

That something has been sending them so sweetly
and so fast.


Through golden gates of converse they wander'd at
their choice,

The soul of one was speaking—only the other's
voice ;

But grand or lovely was that voice, to suit the
changing theme,

And the poor soul was satisfied in feeding on a
dream.

Thus day by day the bond was knit, a strange de-
light to both ;



One served in perfect freedom, unconscious of its
growth,
The other stoop'd in pastime each lavish gift to greet,
For even upon a sleeper's lips the wine of love is
sweet.

But the veil was lifted once, and the heart beheld
its place,
And took it very calmly, too proud to sue for grace;—
No wrong—'twas but a blunder ! no crime—'twas
but a thought !
A small and secret tragedy ; none knew that it was
wrought.

And what remains ? A useless link which cannot
be undone ;
A wealth of precious memories, though precious but
to one ;
The colour which slow sunsets leave, staining a
breezeless sky
With records of past glory, though it only shone to
die !

A PRAYER FOR ONE BELOVED.

FATHER, I bring before Thy throne
 A heart more dear to me than mine ;
 O ! watch it with Thine eyes benign,
 And take it, gently, for Thine own.

What there Thine eyes condemn, remove,
 But not by purifying pains,—
 Thy smile can cleanse the deepest stains,
 And sin is melted in Thy love.

Pour in Thy light, Thy hope, Thy grace,
 I would not have one shadow stay ;
 But when the whole is perfect day
 Joy shall beseem so pure a place.

Glance lightly, arrows of the foe,
 Glance lightly from a breast that wears
 The buckler of a thousand prayers,—
 Ye have no power to work it woe !

Across this heart, Time, softly pass,
As a stream flows and leaves no print,
Save fresher air and tenderer tint,
And lilies shining through the grass.

Be life a dome of leaves and dew
Through which far heaven is faintly seen,
And yet so lovely is the screen,
We scarce can wish a nearer view.

Ah, friend, how vain ! Ev'n while I plead,
Perhaps thy doom is on its way ;
The very moment of the day
Is fix'd on which thy heart must bleed.

I cannot bar the coming ill, .
I can but fling my prayers above
To that Inexorable Love
Which hears, and works Its perfect will.

To It I trust thee ! Let me stand
Beside thee through the painful years,
And give some comfort with my tears,
Though but the pressure of a hand.

LOVE IN SORROW.

WHAT shall I do for thee? Thou hast my
 prayers,
 Ceaseless as stars around the great white throne;
 No passing angel but to heaven bears
 Thy name, wreath'd round with some sweet
 orison :
 Yet evil on thy path may come and go
 Taking deliberate aim to lay thee low,
 While I stand still, a looker on, to prove
 The penury and weakness of my love.

How shall I comfort thee? My tears are thine,
 Full duteously upon thy griefs they wait,
 If thou art wrong'd the bitterness is mine,
 If thou art lonely I am desolate ;
 Yet still upon thy brow the darkness lies,
 Still the drops gather in thy plaintive eyes,
 The nails are sharp, the cross weighs heavily,
 I cannot weep away one pang for thee.

The midnight deepens, and I cannot guide ;
The tempest threatens, and I cannot shield ;
I must behold thee wounded, tempted, tried,
O, agony ! I *may* behold thee yield !
What boots that altar in my heart, whereon
Thy royal image stands, unbreath'd upon
And safe and guarded from irreverent glance
With such array of helpless vigilance ?

O, were this all ! But no ! I *have* the power
To grieve thee by unwary tone or deed,
Or, niggard in my fears, to miss the hour
For comforting with hope thy time of need ;
To hide, too shyly, half the love I feel,
Too roughly touch the wound I come to
heal,
Or even (O ! pardon,) wayward and unjust
To wrong thee by some moment of mistrust.

Yet I would die for thee, and thou for me ;
We know this of each other, and forgive
These tremblings of our faint humanity,
So prompt to die, yet so afraid to live.

Look up to heaven, and wait ! Love greets us
thence,
Disrobèd of its earthly impotence,
Man's perfect love—below still doom'd to be
Stronger than death, feebler than infancy.




WISHES.

LOOKING back,
Wander we through life's long track,
Looking back,
Where a parted sun's soft ray
Lingers yet across the way.

Gazing home,
As the slow bark cleaves the foam,
Gazing home ;
Seems the haven far before
Nought to that remember'd shore.

From thy side
To that shore pale visions glide,
Pale beside thee, but they wear
Haloes of refulgent air,
Standing there ;
And thou beckonest, but in vain !
Never will they come again.



O ! look on !
Turn thy face from glories gone !
Underneath yon dim sea-line
Founts of deeper glory shine ;
Watch and wait till in thy sight
Shall that dimness turn to light,
Pledge of the coming dawn that knows not night.

It may be so ;
I cannot tell, I do not know.
Can the frail vine forsake its prop, to lean
On cords let down from heaven, unfelt, unseen ?
I may believe,
That hinders not that I should gaze and grieve,
Seeking I know not what, and loving what I leave.
Chide not my weakness, so the weak heart saith,
For love is more than faith.

Is there no art,
Thou wistful, wayward heart,
So to transform thy faith that it shall be
The shadow of a near eternity ;
Not clinging to the hour which cannot last,
Not weeping for the perishable past,
But eagle-eyed, and patient as a dove,
Working, in strength, by love ?


OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

WE faint beneath this burning sky,
Upon this barren steep,
O! give us dew before we die,
Give but an hour of sleep!

We fail beside this darken'd bed,
Where dies our life's last light—
Voice that of old didst wake the dead,
Why, why, so dumb to-night?

Hearts we would buckler with our own,
We see them bleed and break;
In vain our strong cries touch the Throne,
O! slay us for their sake!

Souls we would give our souls to save,
Are wandering far and long:
Ah, shut them in the sinless grave,
Life does them such deep wrong!



When shall this fruitless anguish cease ?

When rest this weary earth ?

Was it mere sound, that promised peace,

That music of Thy birth ?

The Voice is very soft and near—

“ Yea, strive, and shrink, and die,

I spare thee not a single tear,

Yet fear not,—*It is I!*”



RIZPAH.

TWO days and nights
I watch'd the winding of the changeful lights
About the ivory shadows of his face,
Which, like a rock, lay still, and nothing knew
Of gloom or glory in each passing hue
That paused upon it. Once, a little while,
It quiver'd in the sunset's rapid smile,
And then I hid mine eyes, I dared not see
What seem'd the waking which must never be.
A blast of wings aroused me, and I look'd
For coming angels,—but behold, a bird
Came like a spectre, shaking, gaunt and grim,
A darkness of great plumes above the place,
With cruel craving eyes, and hungry beak
That touch'd him where he lay, and never stirr'd ;
Then I sprang up, and scared it with a shriek
That shook the palms, and then I knelt and kiss'd
His poor, pale lips, that I might comfort him
So helpless now, who, living, had not brook'd

One breath of insult near him. But I miss'd
The answering kiss that never fail'd before,
And, with a rain of tears which had no hope,
I cover'd him upon the bare bright slope
Beside his brothers, and I look'd no more.

My firstborn son !

O ! wert thou with thy father, when his sword
Pierced his strong heart ! The day of strife was done,
The light lay red upon that evening sward
Not only with the redness of the time,
When, dying like a dying trumpet-blast,
With wrath and grandeur in its faintest chime,
He sank as he had stood—a king to the last !
But thou—I dare not whisper of thy death,
Lest it should shame thee, sleeping at my feet
With those who were in life not dear to me,
Save for his sake, whom I loved more than thee ;
And the wind, striking on my bosom, saith,
“ O ! night, so bitter, closing days so sweet ! ”
And my sobs echo it. O ! sweet the day
When on my heart that head in slumber lay,
Which now lies at my feet ! O ! bitter night !
O ! barren dawn, no life is in thy light !

I cannot say

How long my watch hath been. When by these dead
I first sat down, to guard each powerless head
That neither beast by night nor bird by day
Should stoop upon it, harvest-fields were red ;
And, now, methinks, a shadow of near rain
Hangs on the sky, and softens all the plain.

There was a vision came to me at morn ;
She stood upon a silver floor of dew,
The glory of the daybreak seem'd a veil
For her refulgent face. The MAID I knew ;
Her for whom Judah waits and watches, pale
With hope, until the wondrous Babe is born !


He sate upon the white throne of her breast
(As once on mine sate one as fair as He !)
And stretch'd His arms above the longing earth.
Then I brake forth in praise, that there should be
A woman like myself, and yet so blest,
Who, crown'd and circled by that glorious birth,
Should pass through perfect bliss to perfect rest.

“ Yea, and a sword
Shall pierce thine own heart also !” Chill and faint

On mine incredulous spirit fell the word,
And I was taught the woes of that sweet saint,
And, on my face in anguish falling down,
I felt the Cross was greater than the Crown.

This is the doom

Of women ; evermore beside the tomb,
Where some pale passionate hope is laid asleep,
To sit, as in a wilderness, and weep.
And I accept it. One laments a Past,
Her whole of life, so glorious to the last,
That, looking back, she cannot see how dark
The wide seas spread before her shrinking bark.
One, speechless, weeps for joys that never were,
But might have been ; her heart's unanswer'd cry
Is starved into the silence of despair.
One weeps that what she loved is in the grave,
And one, for grief is rich in fantasy,
Weeps that she had not leave to see it die ;
One mourns for wrongs she suffer'd and forgave,
One waters earth with tears, whose tardy flow
Can do no more than make the grave-flowers grow ;
And one—O ! pity her ! weeps for love's waste ;
The glory of her passion was debased



To be the garment of a phantom, born
Of her own hopes—a vapour and a scorn,
A mountain-shape that melted like a sound,
With all her love irreparably crown'd !

Then am I blest !
God of my fathers, Thou hast given me rest !
These my calm faces not a change can stain,
Where no hope is I cannot hope in vain,
And my tired, troubled heart finds rest, how sweet !
Upon this quiet heart which does not beat.

Here is my place, my work, my home. He owes
To me this charm of desolate repose ;
Safe in the shelter of my love he lies,
I can do all for death which life would prize ;
Nay, more : he might have spurn'd my needless care.
Now am I all to him as he to me,
And, dared I lift that sheet,—(I do not dare.)
On his dear lips I should not start to see
A smile, his father's smile, my meed of yore,
“ She hath done what she could ! ” I ask no more.

No more, save here to die. O ! here, and soon
As a breeze dies upon the breast of noon !

TWO WAYS.

IF only to the darken'd eye
Or dying heart, Thy will is sweet,
Blind me, O Lord, or let me die
At once beneath Thy piercèd feet ;
Against my will Thy way I choose,
I wish my dearest hopes denied,
For I would love Thee, though I lose
The power of loving aught beside !

But hearts that breathe in purer air
Are like a child that finds a flower,
And wonders why it is so fair,
And wears it for one happy hour ;
Then, by a father's arm embraced,
Springs to him, leans upon his breast,
And yields it, ere he ask, in haste
To give him what it loves the best.

COPERNICUS.

THE mountain church of Frauenburg
Hath many a narrow bed,
Where the oaken cross points upward,
And peasants weep their dead ;
Stand we beside this graven stone,
And veil the reverent brow,
And muse upon the mighty one
Whose body lies below.


Earth lay in darkness, as a star
He rose upon the night,
And outlines of the things that are
Shone dimly by his light.
How dreamy looks the world's wild youth
To us of later time,
Familiar with God's ancient truth,
So simple, so sublime !

He first it was whose piercing eye
Went through the mists, and saw

In endless changes, unity,
And in confusion, law.
Though other hands unwound the clue
To realms of clearer day,
All honour to the First is due
Who pointed them the way.

He moved through life as one who hears
And answers from within
Faint music from celestial spheres,
Through earth's discordant din.
Well might he stand with brows inclined,
In silence and apart :
A thought of the Creator's mind
Had pass'd into his heart.

What hours were his of happy toil,
Toil that itself repays,
What victories of bloodless spoil,
What fruitful nights and days !
For him the very darkness gleam'd
With inner radiance fraught,
And the solitudes of starlight teem'd
With multitudinous thought.



Fame hath a jealousy of life,
Her fairest wreaths and best
Still pass the labour and the strife
To crown the time of rest ;
Long years of lonely working o'er,
There came, at length, the hour
When to the dying sage they bore
The record of his power.


In vain ! What matter'd then to him
All he had hoped and plann'd ?
The lustre of his life grew dim
With perfect day at hand ;
He leaves for other feet to climb
The way which first he trod ;
His spirit, having done with Time,
Stands face to face with God.

IN THE NIGHT.

A CROSS the moon the beech-tree weaves
An airy mystery of leaves,
The lights which through that covert pass
Glisten like rain-drops on the grass ;
From clustering woods, unseen, though near,
The noise of falling streams I hear ;
From earth asleep to watching sky
Night goeth upward like a sigh.

O ! surely man and earth were made
For silence, solitude, and shade ;
Life's work seems not to do, but done,
The rest achieved, the victory won ;
Out of all thoughts of sorrow die
The sting, the shame, the agony,
Joy seems an angel's holy kiss,
And grief is but a graver bliss.


The Past hath lost its burning dreams,
Its vain regrets, and memory seems



A wayside well in time of heat,
Where we may bathe our weary feet;
The Future seems a solemn height
A long soft track of temper'd light,
Through purer airs we walk, we climb,
And from our Home look back on time.

Like some great picture nobly wrought,
Grows the whole realm of life and thought,
We did not know how fair the field,
Till here a Master's hand reveal'd
Those changing tints we did not mark,
Those harmonies of bright and dark,
And that far line where, pure and pale,
Earth, touching Heaven, must faint and fail.

O, Father! is it all in vain?
Must we go back to strife again?
From Thee these peaceful moments come,
These glimpses of the bliss of Home,
Ah! let the sweet night overflow,
And cleanse the day from sin and woe,
For how should evil overpower
The soul that saw Thee for one hour!




PARTING.

NOT by thy side, but in thy heart
'Tis mine to dwell ;

We scorn to utter when we part
That feeble word, " Farewell."
Lift up thy weeping eyes, and be
Worthy the throne I keep for thee.

Like some deep well where at noonday
The stars yet shine ;
My soul seeks darkness that it may
Hold all the light of thine ;
And thou, my trembling star, must be,
Pure as the shrine I make for thee.

Upon my love thy soul may rest
As still and safe,
As wild-flowers in a rocky nest
Where billows vainly chafe.
Alas, poor flower ! thou canst not be
Strong as the rock which shelters thee !



I WENT TO LOOK FOR ROSES.

I WENT to look for roses
 When snow was on the ground,
 Alas, a wither'd thorn-bush
 Was all the flowers I found !

I thought of summer-blossoms
 Alight with dews of morn,
 And down I sate me weeping
 Beside the barren thorn.

Out spake a grey-hair'd neighbour,—
 “ O madness ! not to know
 The time of living roses
 Is not the time of snow.”

Fie on such foolish comfort !
 It never dried one tear ;
 I am weeping for my roses
Because they are not here.

TO A LITTLE GIRL,

AGED THREE YEARS AND A HALF.

DEEP in thy round blue eyes
Asleep thy spirit lies,
Or half-awake and wanton in its play,
As are the thoughts of those
Who dally with repose,
Dreaming at noon the summer-hours away.

To thee each sight or sound
Of life's most common round,
Twilight or morn, green field or waving tree,
Bird, flower, or trembling star,
Food for sweet wonder are,
Choice spectacles prepared to pleasure thee.

Along earth's dreary scene
Thou, fearless and serene,
As in a softer air, dost breathe and move,

Each of thy smiles or tears
A potent cause appears
For fresh caresses, and for fonder love.

No despot's court could be
Servile as thine to thee,
Thy casual gestures watching and recording ;
No sage or bard divine
Finds audience such as thine,
Thy half-form'd words as priceless treasure hoarding.

We look on thee and smile,
The saddest hearts awhile
Forget their tears in thy resistless mirth,
As 'mid thick clouds we view
One spot of stainless blue,
So shows thy life among the griefs of earth.

We look on thee and weep,
When from its happy sleep
Thy soul to its appointed task shall rise ;
Must ruthless sorrow chase
The brightness from that face ?
Must tears become familiar to those eyes ?

We look on thee and fear,
How can we greet thee here,
Thou sinless stranger in a world of shame ;
Shall earthly breath or blight
Sully the stainless white
Whereon was written once thy Saviour's name ?

Childhood's unconscious heart,
A sacred thing thou art,
An ark of peace with ceaseless storms around ;
Man, ere thou dare intrude
On that bright solitude,
Put off thy shoes—the place is holy ground.

Well may we look on thee,
Fresh in thy purity,
By no doubt troubled, by no sin defiled,
And pray (Christ spake the word)—
“ Teach us to love Thee, Lord,
Even in the spirit of a little child !”

A DIRGE.


LET her rest !
 L Weary were her days, oppress'd
 By vain cravings to be blest.

Let her sleep !
 Slumber holy, dreamless, deep,
 Cover eyes that waked to weep.

Let her rest !
 Death is spread upon her breast,
 Like soft wings that shade a nest.

Let her sleep !
 False and cruel love, to keep
 Weeping,—she hath ceased to weep.

Let her die !
 All her hope beneath the sky
 Was in her mortality.



SUNSET..

IS it the foot of God
 Upon the waters, that they see the and blaze
 As when of old He trod
 The desert ways,
 And through the night,
 Fearful and far His pillar pour'd its light ?

O ! for strong wings to fly
 Under the limit of yon dazzling verge,
 Where bright tints rapidly
 In brighter merge,
 And yet more bright
 Till light becomes invisible through light.

What wonder that of yore
 Men held thee for a deity, great Sun,
 Kindling thy pyre before
 Thy race is run,
 Casting life down
 At pleasure, to resume it as a crown ?

Or that our holier prayer
Still consecrates thy symbol ? that our fanes
Plant their pure altars where
Thine eastern glory rains,
And thy bright west
Drops prophet-mantles on our beds of rest ?

Here, watching, let us kneel
Through the still darkness of this grave-like time,
Till on our ears shall steal
A whisper, then a chime,
And then a chorus—Earth has burst her prison,
The Sign is in the skies,—the sun is risen !



MAIDENHOOD.

HER heart is light, her fancy free,
Her morn of womanhood,
Fresh as the wind that curls the sea,
Is chainless and unwoo'd ;
The thoughts her bosom's realm that fill
Are vassals only of her will.

Her soul flings wide a hundred gates
Wide as their span can reach,
For universal beauty waits
To enter in through each ;
The mighty tome of earth and skies
She ponders with delighted eyes.

And all serene and holy loves
Are tenants of her breast,
Separate yet close, like brooding doves,
Each on its own dear nest ;
Most sweet and precious are the things
Which grow beneath their folded wings.

If sorrow's sudden wind profanes
 The garden of her bliss,
Her taught and guarded spirit gains
 A blessing e'en from this ;
As from Bethesda's troubled wave
An angel rose to heal and save.

Or if some bright deluding dream
 Her peace of mind betray,
As glaciers in the sunlight gleam
 Only to melt away,
If rainbow-hopes, that shine and die,
Give place to pale reality,

If longings wild and vain oppress
 Her scarce resisting will,
Till earth seems one wide wilderness,
 And love itself grows chill ;
These are a sickness of the heart,—
Health will return, and these depart.

The circle of her home's calm shade
 Is all her heart can crave ;

Life seems a shelter'd green arcade,
And, at its end, a grave,
Where beckoning Faith, with upward eyes,
Stands, just descended from the skies.



THE SHADOW FROM THE VALLEY.

THE child upon the mountain-side
Plays fearless and at ease,
While the hush of purple evening
Spreads over earth and seas ;
The valley lies in shadow,
But the valley lies afar,
And the mountain is a slope of light
Up-reaching to a star.


He looks into the forest,
Where, like a shower of gems,
Drops of delicious sunshine
Dance on the tawny stems ;
He listens to the large grey thrush
Slow flitting to its bower,
But the shadow from the valley
Creeps upward, hour by hour.

The stream that flows above him
Breaks into sudden gold,

Caught from the gorgeous banner
 O'er the broad skies unroll'd ;
 He looks where, 'mid the parting clouds,
 A thousand rainbows meet,—
 But the shadow from the valley
 Hath risen to his feet.

Awhile the lingering glory
 Touches and gilds his hair,
 Then darkness, like an armèd man,
 Hath seized him unaware ;
 The latest bird is silent,
 And, with a wild Tu-whoo,
 The swift owl circles overhead,—
 Ah child, what canst thou do ?

Wilt thou, in hopeless wonder,
 Wring thy faint hands and weep,
 Roam aimlessly a little while,
 Then sob thyself to sleep ?
 Or wilt thou rise, and journey
 Thy drear and toilsome way,
 A pilgrim through the shadow,
 Seeking the dawn of day ?



There shall be stars to guide thee,
There shall be sounds to cheer,
For the air is full of angels,
And God is very near ;
And ever from thy distant home
One tiny spark shall glow,
Brightening as thou draw'st nearer,—
Take courage ! Rise and go !



THE PAINTER.

A HALL it was, where myriad lamps a richer
daylight made,
And folds of falling purple gave harmony to shade;
And odours, spreading softly, and lingering on the
air,
Seem'd weightier than the nothings that men were
murmuring there.

It was a board where rainbow-fruits on golden
salvers glanced,
And, like a flood of melted gems, the merry wine-
stream danced,
And couches of Etruscan grace stood round, that
there might be,
Ev'n in the body's needs a kind of meaner poetry.

Round went the health, the Painter's name from lip
to lip goes round,
And the lifted goblets ring, and the stricken boards
resound;

Triumphant smiles the Painter, with a bowing
monarch's mien,
And seems to feel the deathless crown upon his brows
serene.

He hears the circling whisper: "The wonder of
our time!"

"He painted Lady Margaret—the velvet was sub-
lime!

You could have touch'd the downy curl that
trembled on her cheek;

Her lips were shut so softly, you paused to hear
them speak."

And smiling sits the Painter, as the music lulls his
sense;

This was his art's achievement, and this its recom-
pense;—

Till, one by one, the guests are gone as smoothly
as they came,


And to his studio door he staggers drunk with fame.

Wan and white, in the drear moonlight, his works
upon him stare,

As the flicker of his lonely lamp just gilds them
here and there,
They seem a spectral army, with a false faint life
possess'd,
They gather round, they ask for souls, and smite
each empty breast.

The daylight queen nods from the wall, a plumed
and sceptred ghost,
And smiles back to the mocking smiles of all her
ghastly host ;
There is no movement, yet they seem to stir and
cluster round ;
There goes a whisper through the room, he starts,
and hears no sound.

He laughs away the fancy, he hath reach'd his easel
now,
And there stands still and gazes, cold hand on burn-
ing brow ;
'Tis but a sketch, like many more around him
loosely piled,
A simple theme oft tried in vain—the Mother and
the Child.



One glares in gaudy drapery, a very tavern-sign ;
One hath chill tints and wooden limbs, nor human
 nor divine ;
One seems a peasant-maiden, with a fair babe at
 play ;
And one a dame of quality in some quaint masque-
 array.

He grasps the brush, he labours, like a man whom
 frenzy stings ;
The swift night flutters by and shows faint gleams
 upon her wings ;
He pauses—lo ! a foolish face smiles soft on his
 dismay,
One that might weep and be consoled a dozen times
 a-day !

“ Why am I baffled thus ? ” cries the Painter in
 his wrath,
“ I who have toil’d so valiantly along the upward
 path,
Gathering the glories of all time to swell my vast
 renown,
Standing on past achievements to grasp a present
 crown !

“ I have been in stately galleries where Art her
treasure keeps,
Where, dreaming of the day to come, the speechless
Future sleeps ;
I have loved all Nature's wonder-realms, her pomp
of sun and shade,
Her council of grave mountains, rock-girded,
cloud-array'd ;

“ Where the sweeping lights across them like sea-
birds glance and dart,
And the silence of their shadows is like thunder in
the heart,
And pale rocks glimmer faintly through dark and
hollow glooms,
Like visions of some old churchyard all populous
with tombs.

“ And on still days, when sultry skies seem blue
from pole to pole,
And slow waves creep across the sand like years
across the soul,
And their murmur hath a measure like the chime
of distant bells,

I have gather'd thoughts along the shore, as children
gather shells.

“ Out of these garner'd riches I would create at last,
The hand obeys the will, and the beauties gather fast,
Smooth are the tints and true the lines,—’tis finish’d!
 woe is me !

One touch by old Angelico holds more divinity !

“ Why am I baffled thus ? Does Art stand still and
 then rebound,
Like tides that know their limits, and retreat when
 these are found ?
Is not the Past her empire ? must not she rather be
A river widening as it flows into the endless sea ? ”

He ceases. Is it slumber that is stealing on him
 now ?


A fall of sudden twilight drops cool upon his brow,
And through its wan and mazy gleams a narrow
 cell he sees,
And a grey lonely figure—a man upon his knees.

Lips eloquent in silence, deep eyes and full of light,

Brow peaceful as a babe's, where yet the cleansing
 dews are bright,
While, by the moon's dim lustre, he dreams that he
 can trace
The seal'd cross faintly shining through the shadows
 of that face.

The vision hath a sense of time ; a night hath glided
 by,
And from his knees the man of prayer hath risen
 silently,
As on the first fair Easter-morn the waken'd saints
 arose,
When the moving of the sealèd stone broke on their
 long repose ;

So, with a glory on his brow, he rose ; 'twas strange
 to view
How, under his swift finger, a wondrous picture
 grew ;
Grew, like a flower unfolded by some deep living
 law,
Scarce seen by him : his spirit's eye its own deep
 vision saw.



Lo, as from linkèd notes ye weave a harmony divine,
A perfect face is growing from blended tint and line ;
How gravely falls the golden hair by each trans-
parent cheek !

How lofty is the posture ! the lifted gaze how meek !

See the bright pity of those eyes, those tender brows
and pure,

The sorrow of those sever'd lips, calm waiting to
endure ;

She clasps the babe against her heart, nor shrinks,
yet sees revealed

The sword that is to pierce her, through ev'n that
awful shield.

The Mother and the Child—it is again that simple
theme,—

Love born of grief ! The Painter hath started from
his dream ;

When a soft voice comes suddenly, like dew on
evening air,

“ So went Angelico to work—say, how didst *thou*
prepare ? ”


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